

Floral Street Focus

Volume 7, Issue 1 – September 2003



Principal's Message

Dear Floral Street Families,

Welcome back to all of you who were part of Floral Street School last year, and welcome to those of you who have joined our school community. The 2003-2004 school year promises to be a challenging one in many ways, but I am very enthusiastic about what we can accomplish if everyone works together to support our students. Because of reductions in the budget, we have fewer instructional aides than in past years, yet our student population has continued to grow. In order to provide the level of support necessary for small group and individualized instruction, we will need your help more than ever. While we will still be seeking parent help with clerical tasks, Falcon Facts, and cafeteria supervision, we are also offering training sessions for volunteers who would like to learn how to effectively work with small groups of children in learning centers, in reading groups, and other types of academic tasks. Our goal is to train a minimum of three parents/caretakers from every homeroom as **"instructional volunteers"** so that each of our classrooms gets significant support in these key areas. We will hold training sessions on the following dates: Wednesday, 9/24 from 9:15 to 10:45; Thursday, 9/25 from 1:30-3:00; Monday, 9/29 from 9:15-10:45, and Tuesday, September 30 from 1:30-3:00. In order to ensure that all instructional volunteers understand the expectations and use appropriate strategies, completing a training session is mandatory for this type of volunteering. Please fill out and return the sign-up that will go home in the communication folders (they will also be available at Curriculum Nights). If you cannot attend one of these four sessions but would like to be an instructional volunteer, please contact the office.

Our major undertaking for the coming year is the adoption of a **new report card**. This new reporting system will be "standards-based," meaning that students' progress will be assessed by comparison to specific standards established for each grade level. This system will provide students and parents with more specific feedback regarding student performance related to the knowledge and skills students are expected to have learned at that point in time, and it will also provide more detailed information about students' effort, attitude, and conduct. Our teachers are working very hard to adjust their approach to assessment and grading in order to implement this new report card, which will now be produced three times a year. In order to phase it in effectively, the first trimester report card in November will contain narrative comments in the academic subject areas, with fully implemented performance level ratings in March and June (for details, please attend an informational session on **October 2 at 7:00 p.m. at Floral**). In addition, as another way to ensure that parents have a solid understanding of their children's progress, we will be improving our capacity to meet with parents. While subject to ratification of a new teachers' contract and approval of the School Committee, we anticipate that **October 22 and March 24** will be **parent conference days** where there will be **no school** for students. Classroom teachers will provide more information to you on Curriculum Night regarding scheduling a conference.

I am excited about the new report card and parent conference days because I have come to believe strongly that effective assessment and feedback are the key ingredients to improving our school program. This is true for me as well, and I thank all of you who provided me with feedback through the principal's survey last June. A statistical summary of your responses is contained in this newsletter, and the summary document, including your comments, can be found on our web site at <http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/floral>. While much of the feedback was affirming of the work that I have done, the greatest value comes from the constructive criticism that will help me improve. I look forward to again serving you as your principal, and I welcome your feedback throughout the year as we work together to make Floral Street School an extraordinary place for Shrewsbury's children.

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer

Note from the Nurse

Dear Floral Street Families,

Welcome back to Floral Street School! I hope you enjoyed a fun summer vacation. I would like to review some health information for both our new and returning families.

1. Medication – I am happy to administer any medicine that your child may require while at school. I must receive a written order from your health care provider and a parent permission note before I can administer any medicine. Also, an adult **MUST** deliver medicine to me. Under no circumstances should a child carry medicine in his/her backpack. Our web site has a medication form that can be downloaded for you and your health care provider to complete.
2. Illness – Please do not send your child to school if he/she is ill. If your child has strep throat, he/she must be on an antibiotic for 24 hours before returning to school.
3. Nutrition – Children feel and perform better in school if they have a good breakfast. I have already seen children in my office who are not feeling well because they did not have breakfast. Please allow time in the morning for your child to eat. We have a breakfast program at school, which is an excellent option. Also, try to send in a snack that is healthy. Fruit, yogurt, cheese, granola bars, pretzels and cut up vegetables are all good options.
4. Please send in your 4th grader's updated physical examination form if you have not already done so.

I look forward to visiting classrooms over the next few weeks and to meeting all of the students when I perform hearing and vision screenings beginning in November. Please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss any questions or concerns about your child. I can be reached at 508-841-8729 or via email at mdodakian@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us.

Maureen Dodakian, RN

Welcome New Floral Faculty and Staff

Due to the increase in our school's size, retirements, and transfers, several new educators have joined the Floral Street School faculty for the 2003-2004 school year. We are very pleased with the talent and commitment that these new colleagues have brought to our school community. We are fortunate to have added the following people to our team:

- **Adriana Anderson, Spanish Teacher**, joins us after having taught Spanish in other Shrewsbury Schools last year. She will work with all fourth and fifth graders.
- **Stephanie Aubin, Grade 5 Teacher**, taught in Sunderland, MA before moving back to Central Massachusetts. Ms. Aubin is a graduate of UMass-Amherst, where she was awarded the highest honor for undergraduates in the Education Department.
- **Helene Bisceglia, Grade 3 Teacher**, is making a career change after many highly successful years as a customer service administrator at Allmerica Financial. Mrs. Bisceglia earned an English degree from Queens College (NY) and recently completed her master's degree in Education at Lesley University.
- **Cynthia DiPinto, Grade 1 Teacher**, joins Floral after several successful years in Shrewsbury at both Coolidge and Spring Street. Mrs. DiPinto is job-sharing with Mrs. Gina Kelly.
- **Lori Herring, Title I Reading Teacher**, has over a decade of experience as both a Title I teacher and a classroom teacher in Iowa, New Hampshire, and West Boylston, MA. Mrs. Herring is a graduate of Central College (IA).
- **Laura Lambert, Grade 3 Teacher**, previously taught third grade in Becket, MA and fifth grade in New Jersey. She holds an undergraduate teaching degree from Skidmore College and a master's in special education from Vanderbilt University.
- **Heidi Peltola, Grade 3 Teacher**, returns to Floral after moving back to the area. She has experience teaching in Shrewsbury, Westminster, and Sterling, and is a graduate of Muhlenberg College (PA) and Fitchburg State College, where she earned her master's in education.
- **Nicole Portuondo, Grade 4 Teacher**, was promoted to a teaching position after working as a classroom aide at Floral last year. Mrs. Portuondo is a graduate of Worcester State College.

In addition, we have several instructional aides and ABA technicians who are new to us this year. Welcome to **Judith Adair, Jennifer Gevry, Karen Helmstadter, Erin Loftus, Kathy Mangan, Gina Manzoli, Sindhu Puthanangady, and Kelly Winch.**

From the PTO Presidents

Dear Floral Street School Families:

When I sat down and begin to write this note to all of you it was the night of the first day of school. I couldn't help but think of the common bond we all shared that night as all of our children had completed their first day of school for the 2003-2004 school year. It is hard to believe the summer is over! I hope the last couple of months for each of you were filled with laughter, fun and adventure!

Now it is time to begin the new school year and I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself and the other officers in place that make up your PTO Board. My name is Cheryl Mendelson and along with Paula Trabucco, we will be sharing the responsibility of President. Tracy Johansen will take on the job once again of Secretary and Sophia Sweeney will be our Treasurer. The position of Vice President (or Co-Vice President) is still open, along with the position of Fund-raiser/Event Coordinator and we would welcome anyone who may think that they would like to come aboard and join in the fun. I truly believe the success of the PTO is a team effort so hopefully no one will feel overwhelmed by any one particular position. We all share a common goal and I believe it will be best accomplished working together. Should you be interested in any of these positions or would like further information, please give me a call at 845-1013 or e-mail me at c4cheryl@townisp.com.

Our hope for the PTO this year is to continue its success in offering financial support to the school which provides enrichment programs for the children, as well as continuing to have both family events and fundraising activities that bring together the school community.

We will begin the year with participation in the Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival Parade on Sunday, September 28. This is a great event to get involved in to meet other families from the school and have a great time in the process. More about this event will be sent out in the next week. Following this will be our first major fund-raiser, the Gift wrap sale which will begin in late September and will be headed up once again by JoAnne Hubbard. This sale brings in over \$17,000.00 for the school so it is a very important fund-raiser and your support is greatly appreciated. In October plans have already begun for a "Literacy Night" which promises to be a wonderful family event. Also in October we will once again be offering "Family Photo Weekends." Continuing on through the year, once again we will host the "Hoop Shoot," "March Madness," "Breakfast with a Buddy," the "Falcon Fun Run/Walk" and ending off the year will be our now 2nd Annual Falcon Family Fair on May 29th. Wow...and I didn't even mention everything!

This year we are planning on having 4 general PTO business meetings which will be held on Tuesday nights from 7:00-8:00 p.m. on September 23; November 18; February 10 and May 18. Childcare will again be provided by SHS students.

The PTO is an organization that is here for all of us and can be your way of getting involved, getting your ideas heard or just sharing your thoughts on the school. The PTO can be as much as we all choose to put into it...and can truly work the best and be the most successful for our school and most importantly for our children with the input and help from all of you.

We are truly looking forward to a great year. Hope to see you on September 23.

Cheryl Mendelson and Paula Trabucco

Assistant Principal's Message

When Mr. Sawyer first invited me to write an article for the Back to School Edition of The Falcon Focus, a variety of interesting topics crossed my mind. I thought about the dozens of important new initiatives in our school and district, and about the areas in which teachers, administrators, school personnel and parents have been working to improve over the past few years. These topics range from the Responsive Classroom to Differentiated Instruction to homework, and the new Elementary Report Card. The more I debated about what to write, the more I became confused and frustrated. My thoughts became tangled, and the ideas blurred. It was then that I decided to write something that I continue to strive for, and improve upon, in both my personal and professional life...balance.

After spending time with my family and friends this summer, participating in activities that did not require a telephone, computer, or fax machine, I felt an increase in energy and a renewed spirit. Participating in activities such as riding together for long periods of time in the car, camping on Cape Cod, biking with all sorts of "kiddie attachments" hooked onto the bikes, hiking in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, swimming, running, and enjoying the unusual "quiet of Shrewsbury" during the summer months, greatly contributed to a refreshed perspective, and an enthusiastic attitude, both of which are necessary when beginning a new school year.

At some point in my life, but certainly following the births of each of my four children, I realized that the key to living with an inner peace and relatively calm state of mind, is to continually strive to achieve balance in life. The busier life seemed to get, the more I struggled with keeping my priorities straight. My priorities continued to appear in the following order: rest, healthy eating and daily exercise to ensure my personal well-being in order to be able to care for those around me, most importantly, my family; work responsibilities and commitments; community involvement; and religious observances. During these busy days of September, beginning sports activities such as soccer, football, gymnastics, dance, and hockey, participation in music lessons, karate, and girl/boy scouts, attending those first meetings of the new school year for the many activities in which people are involved, making sure that all notes, lunch money, homework, and miscellaneous items have made it into the backpacks, our plates are full. Each of us needs to continue to strive to keep things in perspective, and work against getting caught up in the whirlwind. Once we, the adults, feel as though we are losing control, so, too, do our children.

Each school year, at some point, I feel as though my plate is too full. It seems as though there is far too little time to relax and enjoy the wonderful people who give meaning to my life. The first ones to notice my crazed look, hurried walk, and frenzied appearance, are my children and husband. My children seem to step back and resist sharing their special events from the day because, as they tell me, "You look too busy, Mom. You're not listening." My third child will say, "Mom, you need to face me so I know you are hearing what I am trying to say." As each of us begins this next journey into a new school year, we need to remember that our children need us, mentally, emotionally, and physically. We must do everything in our power to remain refreshed and invigorated. We, and our children, will be happier as a result of seeking the balance needed to succeed in life. As Albert Einstein once said, "The most important human endeavor is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life."

Jane Lizotte

Parent Feedback for the Principal 2002/03

Question #	Question	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsure / N/A	Survey Count
1	The principal maintains high standards for student safety, behavior, and respect	112	48	3	1	0	1	165
2	The principal sets and maintains a positive and purposeful learning environment	105	54	4	1	0	1	165
3	The principal helps students feel positively about school	102	41	13	2	0	7	165
4	The principal makes parents/caretakers feel welcome at school	106	38	16	1	2	2	165
5	The principal's leadership has strengthened the school community	90	49	11	4	0	11	165
6	The principal's actions reflect the core values of the school community	104	48	7	1	1	4	165
7	The principal is visible and active in the school community	120	35	7	2	0	1	165
8	The principal keeps parents/caretakers informed on important school issues	122	34	8	1	0	0	165
9	The quality of the principal's messages in the Monthly Update and Newsletters is:	96	44	21	1	0	3	165
10	The principal is helpful in resolving concerns presented by parents/caretakers	72	40	11	5	1	36	165
11	Please rate your impression of the principal's <u>overall</u> effectiveness	106	49	9	1	0	0	165

Note: In addition to this statistical summary of your responses, a compilation of all comments made can be found on our web site at <http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/floral>. A copy is also available in the office.
 Thank you very much for your valuable feedback! ~ Joe Sawyer

Shrewsbury High School Alumni Association sells Cat's Meow replicas to benefit the SHS Student Grants Program

Collectibles are the Cat's Meow

Can't think of a unique gift to give to the high school graduate, rower, babysitter, birthday celebrator, or an old friend? Trying to think of a gift to remind you of the school days at Beal or SHS? Want to add to your Cat's Meow collection about historical Shrewsbury? We might have your answer...

The **Shrewsbury High School Alumni Association**, celebrating its 10th year, has some unique gifts to purr about. Proceeds benefit the SHS student grants program.

Replicas include Old Shrewsbury High School, Donahue Rowing Center, Major Howard Beal School, and the New Shrewsbury High School. SHS Colonial emblems, Shrewsbury sweatshirts are also on sale.

The **Shrewsbury High School Alumni Association's Student Grants Program** has awarded 67 grants to over 6,000 SHS students since 1996. It is through generous donations, memberships and community fundraising events, that grants are made possible. The grants promote educational, social, community and/or global projects.

Contact:

Mary Rose Casey
Shrewsbury Children's Center
138 North Quinsigamond Ave.
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
508-755-3922

MRCasey123@aol.com

Cat's Meow Order Forms may be downloaded at www.shrewsburyalumni.org

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!!

We need your help to make our school the best it can be.

We have a need for many types of volunteer assistance. We are holding training sessions now and in the coming weeks in order to provide parents and caretakers with strategies to be effective. If you can't assist us in one of the following ways, there will be other opportunities. Thank you for any help you can provide!

Lunch/Recess Volunteers are needed to help with making our lunch/recess periods as safe and enjoyable as possible for our students. Training sessions will take place Tuesday, September 9 at 9:00 a.m. for 5th Grade in the Middle School Cafeteria, and on the same day at 10:30 for Grades 1-4 in the Floral Cafeteria.

Instructional Volunteers are needed to assist with small groups of children in learning centers, reading groups, and other academic tasks. In order to ensure that all instructional volunteers understand the expectations regarding this type of assistance and use appropriate strategies, completing a training session is mandatory in order to volunteer in this important way.

Instructional volunteer orientation/training will be held on the following dates/times. If you are interested, please fill out this information and return it to your child's teacher.

Wednesday, September 24, 9:15-10:45 _____

Thursday, September 25, 1:30-3:00 _____

Monday, September 29, 9:15-10:45 _____

Tuesday, September 30, 1:30-3:00 _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Child's Teacher: _____

Grade: _____

FLORAL STREET SCHOOL
SCHOOL CALENDAR 2003-2004

September 1.....	No School – Labor Day
September 9.....	Grade 1 Curriculum Night
September 10.....	Grade 2 Curriculum Night
September 11.....	Grade 3 Curriculum Night
September 15.....	Grade 4 Curriculum Night
September 16.....	Grade 5 Curriculum Night
October 6.....	No School – Yom Kippur
October 13.....	No School – Columbus Day
October 22.....	No School – Parent Conference Day (pending approval)
November 4.....	No School – Professional Day for Staff (Election Day)
November 11.....	No School – Veterans’ Day
November 26.....	Half-day – Begin Thanksgiving Break
November 27-28.....	No School – Thanksgiving Break
December 24-January 2.....	No School – Holiday Vacation
January 19.....	No School – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 20.....	No School – Professional Day for Staff
February 16-20.....	No School – February Vacation
March 12.....	No School – Professional Day for Staff
March 24.....	No School – Parent Conference Day (pending approval)
April 9.....	No School – Good Friday
April 19-23.....	No School – April Vacation
May 31.....	No School – Memorial Day
June 17.....	Half Day – Last Day (if no snow days)

Dates subject to change...please check announcements and newsletters for updates.